DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 039 852 HE 001 584

AUTHOR	Long, Durward
TITLE	The Impact of Activist Students in Changing the Governance and Culture of the Campus.
INSTITUTION	American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	3 Mar 70
NOTE	5p.; Paper presented at the 25th national conference of the American Association for Higher Education, Chicago, Illinois, March 3, 1970
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.35
DESCRIPTORS	*Activism, College Students, *Governance, *Higher Education, Institutional Role, Student Interests, *Student Participation

ABSTRACT

Activist students have made a positive impact on several areas of higher education. (1) Activist campaigns have revealed deficiencies in institutional governance and pointed out many undemocratic methods, structures and processes. (2) Activism has led to increased participation by students in policy and decision making. (3) With increased student participation has come a decline of institutions in loco parentis, which has promoted students to become self-directive in their search for moral standards and meanings. (4) Activists have severely weakened, if not destroyed, the myth which formerly all but deified the professoriate. (5) Activists' disdain for "Scientific Man" is stimulating efforts to restore MAN as the subject of basic study and concern. (6) Activism has sharpened the political and social awareness of college and high school students. Two negative effects of activism have been the growing belief that destruction and violence are legitimate as long as they proceed from a personal commitment to a "just" cause, and the fanning of already present tendencies to repress free inquiry and expression. It is likely that the full impact of activism is yet to come. (AF)

ED039852

Group 28
Tuesday morning, March 3

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE IMPACT OF ACTIVIST STUDENTS IN CHANGING THE GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE OF THE CAMPUS*

Durward Long
Vice Chancellor
University of Wisconsin Center Division

Reform and change within institutions of higher learning have rarely been easy. Swooping change has too often been an export item of academe and not at all intended for internal consumption. Although individual scholars have found it a duty to recommend and, in cases, to attempt to effect changes of global magnitude to solve problems of equal scope, including revolutionary schemes for reforming governments and society, academicians as a group have been reluctant to make significant changes within the citadels of learning. The reluctance has been pronounced if such changes affect the sharing of hard-won power in matters of teaching, curriculum, and academic governance. Dramatic and significant faculty-initiated changes usually have come as responses to pressures, either positive or negative, from other powerful interests such as administrative groups, governing boards, state and federal governments, and presently, students.

The impact of activist students in changing the governance and culture of the campus has been significant in many ways. Perhaps the greatest positive impact has been to bring into open view those areas within higher education which desperately need reform, and to demand and introduce new campus cultures. Instead of appearing as initiators of reform, institutions of higher learning have become targets for reform. An activist leader has reminded us that radical politics is the "politics of unmaking". It is probably in the "unmaking" that much of the impact of activism has been felt.

1. Activists' campaigns and their demands have revealed deficiencies in college and university governance and pointed out many oligarchical and undemocratic methods, structures, and processes within higher education. Although the pressure for student participation has confused the question of adequate models of governance with appropriate representation, we are now much more sensitive to the delusions of "meritocracy". We are equally skeptical about equating academic competency within a narrow specialty field with a capacity to govern justly and vitally.

In response to the deficiencies in governance structures and procedures, new models are appearing. In an almost desperate search for a type which is able to resolve conflicts among the institution's several constituencies and to develop operable policy effectively, colleges and universities are employing interesting patterns of governance. These patterns include a variety of constituent assembly and adversary models along with a patching up of the traditional senate devices.

2. Without question, activism has led to increased participation by students in policy and decision-making in many areas in addition to all-campus governance. The meaning of such participation is still not exactly clear to all parties. As a matter of fact, there is much confusion about the purpose, the content, and the scope of student participation. In a very real sense, protest groups organized by a simplistic participatory democracy ruse have involved large numbers of

HE 001 584

*Paper presented to Discussion Group 28 on "What is (or will be) the impact of activist students in changing the governance and culture of the campus", at the 25th National Conference on Higher Education, sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education, Chicago, Tuesday, March 3, 1970. Permission to quote restricted.

students in participating in efforts to influence policy. In more of a structural and continuing way, there has been an equally dramatic increase in participation. More and more search and screen committees for key administrative positions now have student members, as do many college and department policy-making committees. Although at least one state's attorney general has ruled that a student voting member of an elected governing board would represent a conflict of interest, there are student members with varying roles on several boards of trustees. An interesting fact about student representation on important faculty committees, however, is the fact that of the institutions reporting in 1967-68 that students sat on most committees, fifty percent indicated that such practice was initiated in 1964 or earlier, before the protest era. Only six percent of a return sample of 1244 institutions reported in 1968 that no arrangements had been made for student participation on committees. So far, most student participation has been on committees concerned with campus-wide issues, primarily involving various aspects of student life; only recently have institutions begun to involve students at the departmental and purely academic issues levels; administrative policy decisions remain the area in which students participate least.

3. Hand in hand with increased student participation has come a dramatic decline in institutions' acting in loco parentis, a development which has opened possibilities for new cultural variety on the campus. The demise of in loco parentis has given rise to a new freedom for students to find a moral meaning in life that is genuinely self-directive. As a result, dorm and curfew regulations have been relaxed; regulations are determined by the residents of each unit; dorms in which the two sexes are residents have appeared; fraternities and sororities have mergers; there has been an increase in the number of unmarried couples living together; institutions have begun distribution of the Pill, and far more liberal institutional policies about the use of drugs and alcoholic beverages have been accepted.

In fact, it is in the creation of a new culture that many student activists have the greatest interest and in which some have the strongest hope for changing America. The decline of in loco parentis makes more possible and likely the development of new cultural patterns, united only by their anti-establishment nature. Free from previous constraints, millions of youths find on the campus the opportunity and receive the encouragement to challenge intellectually, socially, politically, and personally, the dominant values of contemporary culture. Having discovered that faculty resistance to change is less pronounced in matters of non-academic behavior, college students have won more and more personal freedoms. Most student victories have been won by activists and many by using the protest tactic.

It is also reasonably clear, for good or ill, that activist students have had a greater substantive influence on the campus culture than in matters of governance. At the heart of this activist culture is soul and rock music which articulates more clearly than any manifesto or rallying cry, the values and philosophies undergirding the movement. "There's a New World Coming", sings Mama Cass; "The Age of Aquarius" declares the future age, and the Jefferson Airplane put it simply in "We Can Be Together".

Out of the philosophic values seen in their music, our activist friends have influenced the return of a basic debate about the educational role of a college or university. Attention is being directed to the development of the whole student, to releasing creative abilities and energies, and the relationship of these

objectives to equipping the student with certain marketable skills. Students have rekindled our attention upon the need for developing and refining moral, aesthetic, and local capacities of men and women in a manner that creates genuine indepencence.

4. Activists have severly weakened, if not destroyed, the myth which has formerly all but deified the professoriate. Thier questions and activities have brought into the open the professoriate's self interest and its carriest and guild values, while the tension between what man is and what he might and ought to be goes untended. The willingness of the professoriate to sell their skills to the highest bidder, sometimes to purposes which activist consider hostile to man, has reduced the professoriate to the level of other professionals; not any more wise or humane than other professionals.

5. The activists' disgust and disenchantment with rationality, often equated with gathering and transmitting factual information and technical expertise, has caused a weakening of confidence in the "Scientific Man" and probably influenced interests in learning more about non-traditional and non-scientific behavior. At the same time, they have influenced the Rediscovery of Man ahd have stimulated beginning efforts to restore MAN as the subject of basic study and concern.

Students' unhappiness with what they perceive as hyper-rationality and their concern for a wider range of experiences, particularly of the senses, has led them into hallucinatory drugs, bi-sexuality, rock and soul sounds, and communal pads. Their emphasis upon the unexplored and the spontaneous has influenced an interest in Eastern mysticism, scientology, astrology and witchcraft, graphology and numerology, macrobiotic foods, street theatres, and encounter groups. Participating and sharing, senses and emotion, and faith and spirit are offered as antitheses to competition, self-preservation, cold rationality and objectivistic logic. Many of these characteristics are promoted by student activism and there are few campuses which have not felt the impact on the campus culture. Student interest in these new cultural patterns have prompted the charge that the activist movement is basically anti-intellectual. For example, the recent contributions of our venerated colleagues Barzun and Hook equate emotion with irrationality. In making that judgement, they demonstrate the credibility of the activists' charge that higher education overemphasizes purely intellectual and cerebal activity and fails to consider the very real non-rational but nevertheless fundamental aspect of human development.

6. Among the most important results of activism is the sharpening of political and social awareness among college and high school students, encouraging their involvement in the life of the community. Along with this increased sensitivity among students has come a greater public and political awareness of the need to give more responsibilities to college-age youth. As much or more than any single group, activist students are responsible for the degree and extent of the current attack upon "elitism" on college campuses, and should be credited with many of the successes in bringing significant numbers of minority groups into concepts about admissions and curriculum; it is contributing to a new campus culture.

In addition to the six effects of activism described heretofore, there are others of a more clearly negative nature, two of which should be emphasized.

1. Activism on the campus has fed the flames of an already too violent society and deluded thousands of young people into believing that destruction and violence is legitimate as long as it proceeds from a personal commitment to a cause perceived by themselves as just and moral. Radical politization has persuaded many activists that destruction of unjust institutions is more likely to produce desirable change than futile efforts to change them. Although it is unclear as to the numbers and percentages of students who are prepared to act on that persuasion, I would hazard a guess that they are increasing, as will acts of destruction and vandalism. While I have no quantitative data to substantiate it, I believe 1969-70 has so far been the banner year for destruction by activist students, both secretly and openly by mob action.

2. Just as surely as activism has fanned already-present tendencies to violence, so has activism awakened among elements of the establishment the already present tendency to repress free inquiry and expression. Coming at just the time of very great economic needs by higher education, student activism has given the enemies of public higher education excuses for reduced support as well as surface justification for becoming involved internally in the operation of colleges and universities. More fundamentally, it has given the anti-intellectual forces within our society a rallying point for repressing intellectualism. Ironically, violent activism has also compelled even the most liberal institutions and administrators to rely upon police power and force in attempts to keep institutions open and to protect the rights of all members of academe. But the impact has been to encourage the forces of repression on campuses. Academic freedom has suffered, caught between the many destructive elements of activism and the repressive foes of intellectualism.

Few institutions, if any, have felt all the effects of activism described here, but few have escaped all of them. In most institutions, there is a strange mixture of resistance in some areas of activist concern and almost complete acquiescence in others. The variety of combinations of response is highly likely to produce several different institutional models over the next decade to enrich the landscape of higher education.

Beyond the return to variety, the future impact of activist developments cannot be divined, of course, but it seems safe to suggest that the full impact is yet to come. Despite several recent predictions that the rebellion is over, I believe that the peak of activism has not yet been reached. It seems to be expanding into two directions, chronologically downward into the very young and upward into the younger members of professions. Activism has not yet peaked among faculty, although a decreasing demand in relation to the output of Ph.D.'s may prevent full development of faculty activism. Nor have the graduate schools felt the full impact of activist students, probably because of their debilitating dependence during the Ph.D. process. Professional disciplinary organizations of college teachers, despite the tremors they have felt in recent years, are likely to experience some fundamental changes as products of activism enter the ranks. It is also likely that the professions will be likewise jarred, and fairly certain that the fullest impact of activist students on the body politic lies ahead of us.

There is no way to predict whether the outcome of the activist movement will give the institutions of higher learning greater vitality and value, or whether they will be destroyed in the conflict and with them free inquiry. It is also uncertain whether the anti-intellectual forces of academic freedom will be successful in the exercise of open criticism and the search for improving the quality of life. But, fundamentally, the result will depend upon the commitment of students, faculty, administrators, and other friends of higher learning in effecting meaningful change, and in resisting among its members the anti-intellectual oppression and authoritarianism which is often born of a crusade perceived to be holy.